

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 INR-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 IO-03 /040 W

----- 058081

R 051105Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9580

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 4438

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: OAS, AR, BR

SUBJECT: OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ELECTION AND ARGENTINE-BRAZILIAN
RELATIONS

REF: A. BRASILIA 4112 B. STATE 120939 C. STATE 123060

SUMMARY: BRAZILIAN OFFICIAL CONFIDENTIALLY EXPLAINED BRAZILIAN
ACTIONS RE OAS SEC GEN ELECTION AS AIMED IF POSSIBLE AT DEPRIVING
ARGENTINA OF PRESTIGIOUS VICTORY, OR, AT MINIMUM, AT PUTTING
ORFILA ON NOTICE AND SHOWING BRAZILIAN SECTORS CONCERNED
ABOUT ARGENTINA THAT GOB PUT UP DETERMINED FIGHT. OFFICIAL
CLAIMED "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" CERTAINLY DID EXIST, BUT SAID
IT WAS ARGENTINA RATHER THAN U.S. WHICH VIOLATED IT. END SUMMARY.

1. CHIEF OF FOREIGN MINISTRY'S OAS DIVISION (LIMA) JUNE 3 GAVE
EMBOFF LENGTHY EXPOSITION OF GOB RATIONALE AND PURPOSES REGARDING
OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ELECTION, STARTING AT POINT WHEN
SAPENA PASTOR WITHDREW.

2. ACCORDING TO LIMA, BRAZILIANS KNEW THAT GOMEZ BERGES CANDIDACY
WAS UPHILL FIGHT, BUT THEY WERE DETERMINED TO SUPPORT HIM
IN ALL-OUT FASHION IN ORDER TO BLOCK ASCENSION OF ARGENTINE
CANDIDATE. THIS WAS NOT, SAID LIMA, BECAUSE BRAZIL FELT IT HAD
ANYTHING TO FEAR IN CONCRETE TERMS FROM AN ARGENTINE OAS SYG
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(SEE BELOW, HOWEVER), BUT BECAUSE OF WHAT AN ARGENTINE VICTORY
MEANT ON TWO PLANES.

3. ONE OF THESE, HE EXPLAINED, WAS ARGENTINE-BRAZILIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS A POLITE CHESS GAME: ON THIS PLANE, ORFILA'S VICTORY WAS A SCORE FOR ARGENTINA, ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD BE OTHER SCORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRAZIL. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE STRESSED, THERE ARE "CERTAIN SECTORS" OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY WHICH ARE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO ANYTHING HAVING TO DO WITH ARGENTINA: ELABORATING, HE SAID THAT SINCE HIS RETURN FROM THE OAS GA, HE HAS BEEN CONSTANTLY PRESSED BY A WIDE VARIETY OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING STUDENTS AT THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE WHEN HE WENT THERE TO GIVE A TALK, ABOUT WHAT WENT WRONG IN WASHINGTON, AND AT THIS POINT "ONLY THE MAID" HAS FAILED TO TWEAK HIM OVER ORFILA'S VICTORY. (IN A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION, A PROMINENT, ADMINISTRATION-CONNECTED SENATOR WHO TOOK THE FLOOR AT ADMINISTRATION INSTANCE TO PRAISE ITAMARATY'S HANDLING OF THE MATTER CONFIRMED THAT THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY ARE EXTREMELY EMOTIONAL WHERE ARGENTINA IS CONCERNED.) SAYING HE WAS SPEAKING FRANKLY, PERSONALLY, AND AS A FRIEND, LIMA ADDED THAT HE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THE DEPT. OF STATE WOULD BE AWARE OF THIS SENSITIVITY, TO WHICH BRAZILIAN REPS ALLUDED DURING THE OAS GA, AND WOULD TAKE IT INTO ACCOUNT.

4. THUS, LIMA CONTINUED, BRAZIL FOUGHT ORFILA'S ELECTION DOGGEDLY AND OPENLY FOR TWO BASIC REASONS: ONE WAS TO PUT HIM ON NOTICE, AND HE NOW STANDS "WELL WARNED", THAT BRAZIL OPPOSED HIM AND WILL NOT HESITATE TO CALL HIM ON ANY ACTIONS SMACKING OF ANTI-BRAZILIANISM: THE OTHER WAS FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, TO SHOW THAT GOB PUT UP A DETERMINED FIGHT.

5. NOW THAT THE ELECTION IS OVER, LIMA SAID, GOB IS PREPARED TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO ORFILA'S NATIONALITY AND CONDUCT BUSINESS AS USUAL. (A MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STAFF, WHO ACCOMPANIED HIM TO WASHINGTON, TOLD EMB OFF THAT ON THE DAY FOLLOWING HIS ELECTION ORFILA CALLED ON AMBASSADORS ARAUJO CASTRO AND PADILHA VIDAL, A GESTURE WHICH THE BRAZILIANS APPRECIATED AND THE SPIRIT OF WHICH THEY WERE PREPARED TO RECIPROCATATE.) THEY RECOGNIZE THAT OAS SYG IS NOT A POWERFUL POSITION, AND UNDERSTAND THAT ORFILA WILL HAVE TO TREAD VERY CAREFULLY. LIMA NEVERTHELESS WENT ON TO NOTE ONE SPECIFIC CONCERN: HEAD OF PLATE BASIS

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DEVELOPMENT DIVISION OF OAS IS BRAZILIAN, AND ARGENTINES HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET RID OF HIM FOR YEARS.

6. REGARDING THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT", LIMA SAID THERE CERTAINLY WAS ONE, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT THE SORT OF THING THAT GETS DOCUMENTED AND PRESERVED IN ARCHIVES. HE COMPARED BRAZIL'S VOTES FOR MUNIZ IN 1968 WITH "KISSES WHICH LEAVE THE DAMSEL'S VIRGINITY INTACT", AND CONCLUDED THAT 27 YEARS' OBSERVANCE OF THE AGREEMENT WAS IN ITSELF PROOF OF THE AGREEMENT'S EXISTENCE. IN HIS VIEW, LIMA CONTINUED, IT WAS NOT THE U.S., STRICTLY

SPEAKING, BUT ARGENTINA WHICH HAD VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT BY PRESENTING A CANDIDATE. IN ANY EVENT, HE SAID, THE AFFAIR IS NOW OVER, AND IS BEST PUT BEHIND US.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SOME ASPECTS OF THIS PRESENTATION CLEARLY HAVE THE EARMARKS OF AFTER-THE-FACT RATIONALIZATION, THE POINT ABOUT PLAYING TO DOMESTIC (I.E. BRAZILIAN MILITARY) SENTIMENT IS THE BEST EXPLANATION WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED FOR THE MINISTRY'S SLAM-BANG HANDLING OF THE MATTER, SO ALIEN TO ITS USUAL FORM. IT MAY ALSO BE WORTH NOTING THAT LIMA, POSSIBLY EXAGGERATING, CLAIMED THAT AT ONE POINT (UNIDENTIFIED) PERSONS HERE WERE CALLING FOR BRAZIL TO GET OUT OF THE OAS, BUT HE THOUGHT THE MINISTRY HAD SUCCEEDED IN CALMING THOSE SENTIMENTS.

8. THROUGHOUT HIS PRESENTATION, LIMA REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING. PLEASE TREAT ALL OF ABOVE AS STRICTLY FYI. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BRASIL04438
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750197-0517
From: BRASILIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750675/aaaacqit.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 75 BRASILIA 4112, 75 STATE 120939, 75 STATE 123060
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 DEC 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <03 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA, 3.4.X6>; RELEASED <19 DEC 2003 by woolflhd>; RELEASED <19 DEC 2003 by woolflhd>; APPROVED <19 DEC 2003 by woolflhd>; APPROVED <19 DEC 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ELECTION AND ARGENTINE-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, AR, BR, OAS, (ORFILA, ALEJANDRO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006